

Mr. Ford's Page

HUMANITY is imperfect, as can be seen in all its works. The fact that the world moves around at all, that individual human life is able to fulfill its term, that men are able to fulfill the great experiences of being born, learning, loving, working, and presently passing on into whatever the next stage may hold for them, is due to the other fact that beneath and around humanity there are conditions and forces which no man can create, no man greatly deflect, and no man destroy—a foundation that is sure. We are all pensioners on the bounty of the universe. Of all the things we work with, and all the forces we manipulate, we have not originated one. In the whole splendid list of human invention there is no record of a human being creating so much as a blade of grass.

Because we are imperfect, we are not free. None of us is free. Until there is no bread to be baked and no children to be reared, none of us will ever be free. We are bound on the wheel of life, and while it is given to men under certain conditions of derangement to hurl themselves off the wheel of life, it is agreed by the common sense of the world that suicide is self-robbery, because the chief harvest of life, after all, is experience and character. Character is the refined product of experience.

We have certain inherent rights, born with us, and they are rights because everyone is, by the fact of his being a normal human being, endowed with them. They were given us; we did not win them. We were made men, rather than insects; we did not make ourselves. These rights are of the most fundamental kind. The right to breathe the air and feel the sun; the right to freedom of our own person; the right to the use of our own mind; the right to the earth, which is ours not by purchase nor any form of winning, but by inheritance; the right to the benefit of society.

But alongside our rights are certain necessities. The necessity of taking food, which leads back to the necessity of procuring it, which in turn leads back to the necessity of putting forth the exertions which produce it. There is also the necessity of sleep, which leads back to the necessity of privacy and security, and this in turn brings about the necessity of a home.

Between all these there are certain urges—native motions which are so connected with all parts of our nature that in their lower phases they are called brutal and in their higher phases angelic; doubtless many of them do root, or at least seem to, in the fleshly nature. But this is simply one way of saying that man is an organism that can draw up from the lower planes of life the material out of which to build higher creations. There is a carrion type of mind which interprets all the higher in terms of the lower. If we are able at all to see which way the life process is going, it is more in keeping with nature to interpret the lower in terms of the higher. These urges go all the way from love to ambition. Love is an ambition of the spiritual life; what we more commonly know as ambition is man's sense of ability and mastery to manifest itself among the material adventures with which mankind is concerned. Between these two points, most of life is reached. Beneath them is degeneracy; above them are the ideals in which man's further progress is indicated.

When you go into a strange city and stand upon the streets, something of the marvel of human society comes over you. Here are hundreds of thousands of people whom you do not know, who do not know you. The interests to which they devote themselves are all individual. They work for their own living. They spend their money on their own needs. They establish their own homes. They live in the center of their own families. Hundreds of thousands of individuals, tens of thousands of family groups, all shut

off from each other by an inviolate wall of private interest. Have you ever realized how separate we all are? There are chambers of our lives to which even our dearest relations cannot enter, not because we keep them out, but because Personality has limits which none can cross either to come out or go in. From our inmost Personality, to our outermost personal and private interests, we are separate beings.

And yet there is the city, which is itself a sort of family. And there is the nation which is a family of cities. And over one hundred million persons not only live, but live together, in a measure of mutual accord and confidence which is really marvelous when you stand back and look at it.

What makes this possible? Why, just as there is the common earth beneath us which is dependable, on which we implicitly rely for its motions which bring day and night and the seasons, so there is common element amid all the myriad differences of individuals, which makes human society possible and keeps it unified. We are bound together by the necessity of being with our kind, and by that higher necessity, which seems to grow out of our Personality, of yielding to them also the rights we know ourselves to possess.

But when you look at what this society has constructed as the conditions of its living and working together, you are at once aware that nature has done something for man that man has not been able to turn back toward nature in the building up of his economic life.

Why does it work? Because it agrees, at a sufficient number of points, with the underlying laws of nature. It is right and natural to work and to produce articles which are useful to life. Enough people are doing that to hold the world together. Enough people are growing foodstuffs, mining ore and coal, manufacturing the useful commodities; enough people are engaged in the work of distribution, to keep the world turning.

Why doesn't it work better? Because it does not agree at a sufficient number of points with the underlying laws of nature. Among those who are really serving there are a sufficient number who are merely exploiting, to diminish much of the effect of the service. They hinder both ways: they hinder the service coming as serviceably as it might to those who need it; and they hinder the reward for the service coming as freely as it might to those who render it. These men are not the men who make things. They are not constructive. Because they have

gained control of distribution, they can collect a tax both ways. They have been permitted to set up the tollgates of trade, and even if we do credit them with having kept the highways of trade in working order, the toll they collect is more than they are entitled to for their work. Distribution is a necessary factor in economic life. But distribution which makes production harder, and possession of that which is produced harder to obtain, is a hindrance, not a help.

The result is dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction is not dangerous; it ought to be exceedingly hopeful. But just here the exploiters get in their hand too—they begin to exploit the dissatisfaction. The exploitation of dissatisfaction is an established business today. Its object is not to settle anything, nor to get anything done, but to keep dissatisfaction in existence. And the instruments used to do this are a whole set of false theories and promises which can never be fulfilled as long as the earth remains what it is.

There are two sets of forces to look out for and to eliminate as soon as it can be done—the forces that exploit service to the detriment of service, and the forces that capitalize our new social vision for their own gain. Strangely enough, these two forces, one destroying from the top, and the other undermining from beneath, are united, though they are apparently poles apart. The people have a paramount duty—to keep themselves from being fooled.

THERE are two dangerous sets of exploiters which the people ought to watch very closely. We are familiar with the exploiters of the products of labor, men who do not themselves produce but take toll on production. They give the producer less than his service is worth, and they take from the consumer more than the product has cost.

This breeds dissatisfaction. There are exploiters right on hand to exploit the dissatisfaction. Certain influences in this country trade in unrest, profit by disorder, and exploit the honest trouble of the people. Their whole business is to keep men divided by bad temper and suspicion. These exploiters would be the first to suffer by any great advance in social justice. Use your eyes, use your common sense. Spot the men who shout about our difficulties without sharing them. If you do, you will soon see something in this country worth noting.